

Testimony By
Dr. Alexander Shvartsman
Professor and Department Head of Computer Science and Engineering
Director of the Center for Voting Technology Research
University of Connecticut
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Dear Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Alexander Shvartsman, am a Professor and the Department Head of Computer Science & Engineering, and the Director of the Center for Voting Technology Research at the University of Connecticut.

I thank you for supporting the University of Connecticut and for the opportunity to address you.

The challenges our State faces in addressing the budget deficit are serious, and I am confident that you are working hard to deal with the situation in a thoughtful and diligent way.

The recently released recommended budget for next year results in a gap in the vicinity of \$40 million between the State funding and what is needed to operate the University. The educational programs at UConn critically depend on the State funding and a reduction in that amount will have a substantial negative impact.

In my own department, Computer Science & Engineering, while our research programs are in-part supported by the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, and the industry, our educational programs, and especially undergraduate programs, critically depend on the State funding. Our undergraduate enrollment nearly doubled in the last four years, and our undergraduate student-to-faculty ratio alarmingly increased from the respectable 14:1 to a concerning 21:1. Many of our undergraduate classes doubled in size in recent years. The number of applications for admission to our majors increased this year by over 45%, likely placing additional stress on our overextended resources in the coming year. The proposed cuts will affect *primarily* and *disproportionately* our ability to deliver quality education by closing the doors to hiring outstanding faculty, by further reducing or even eliminating instructional support, such as teaching assistants, and by making it difficult or impossible to support innovation in the classroom. Ultimately the gains made by the University may well be reversed.

I chose UConn in 1997 as the home for my career in education and research because I believed that the University, as the flagship institution of higher learning in the State of Connecticut, had a unique potential to become one of the best universities in the Nation, especially given the strategic investments that were being made by the legislature. Today, more than 17 years later, having witnessed the transformation and the progress of the University, and having contributed my own share of hard work, I believe this more than ever.

At the same time, I firmly believe that the recommended cuts will have a devastating impact on our students, resulting in overcrowded classrooms, substantially reduced instructional support, and lower quality educational experience. In the end, UConn might not be viewed as a natural choice by the best faculty and students. Longer-term, the emerging budgetary landscape will negatively impact UConn's stature, and marginalize our ability to be a positive force for the State's economic and societal development.

I thank you again for the opportunity to speak, and I hope that you will take my remarks into account.